

What is LARC, and why is it important?

LARC is the abbreviation for long-acting reversible contraception. It is an effective and easy form of reversible birth control. There are two types of LARC - intrauterine devices (IUD) and implant. LARC methods, both hormonal and non-hormonal can be placed at any time, including right after giving birth, providing immediate contraception. Patients are encouraged to talk with their health care provider about all methods of birth control including immediate postpartum intrauterine devices (IUDs) or a Nexplanon implant prior to discharge. A LARC device can prevent pregnancy for 3 to 10 years after a simple procedure. Follow-up visits may be necessary. LARC is an ideal form of birth control for women who are not ready to have a child, women who have a child but want to ensure spacing, or women who are finished with childbearing and want a reliable, effective form of birth control. It can be removed at any time, immediately restoring the ability to get pregnant. LARC is a leading choice for contraception for female OB/GYN physicians.

How effective is LARC?

Abstinence is the only 100% effective form of birth control; however, research has shown LARC to be 20 times more effective than birth control pills, the patch or vaginal ring.

What are the benefits of LARC?

LARC is the most highly effective birth control in helping prevent unintended pregnancies. Some LARCs can also help improve health outcomes related to menstrual disorders. It has been shown effective in improving anemia due to excessive menstrual blood loss, as well as preventing surgery related to issues caused by fibroids or endometriosis.

What are the risks of LARC?

Depending on the type of LARC, some women have experienced side effects such as headaches, nausea, breast tenderness and mood changes. You should discuss these with your health care provider. Serious complications related to the use of LARC are uncommon. LARCs are highly effective at preventing unintended pregnancy. LARC methods do not protect against the transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STI) such as syphilis, chlamydia, HIV/AIDS, etc. Routine use of condoms and STI testing can prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections.

Does LARC cause pain or discomfort?

Most women experience some degree of discomfort during the insertion of an IUD or placement of a Nexplanon implant. If you have an IUD placed immediately after the delivery of your infant and have chosen to have an epidural, this should control the discomfort. An IUD can also be placed at the time of your cesarean section. Your health care provider should discuss the possibilities of pain or discomfort that may occur during IUD insertion as well as options for pain management.

<https://health.usf.edu/-/media/Files/Public-Health/Chiles-Center/FPQC/LARC-Poster-FINAL.ashx>; <https://ihpi.umich.edu/news/long-acting-reversible-contraception-highly-efficacious-safe-underutilized>; <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/childrens-hospital/community-pediatrics-training/larc/what-is-larc.aspx>; <https://www.ashsexualhealth.org/understanding-larc/>; <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2018/05/adolescents-and-long-acting-reversible-contraception-implants-and-intrauterine-devices>